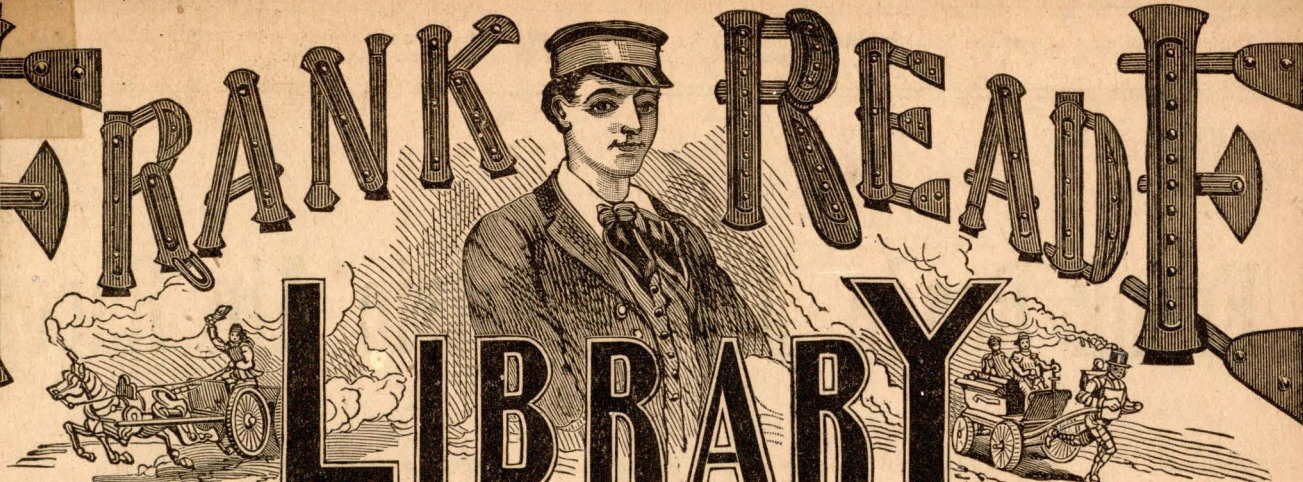


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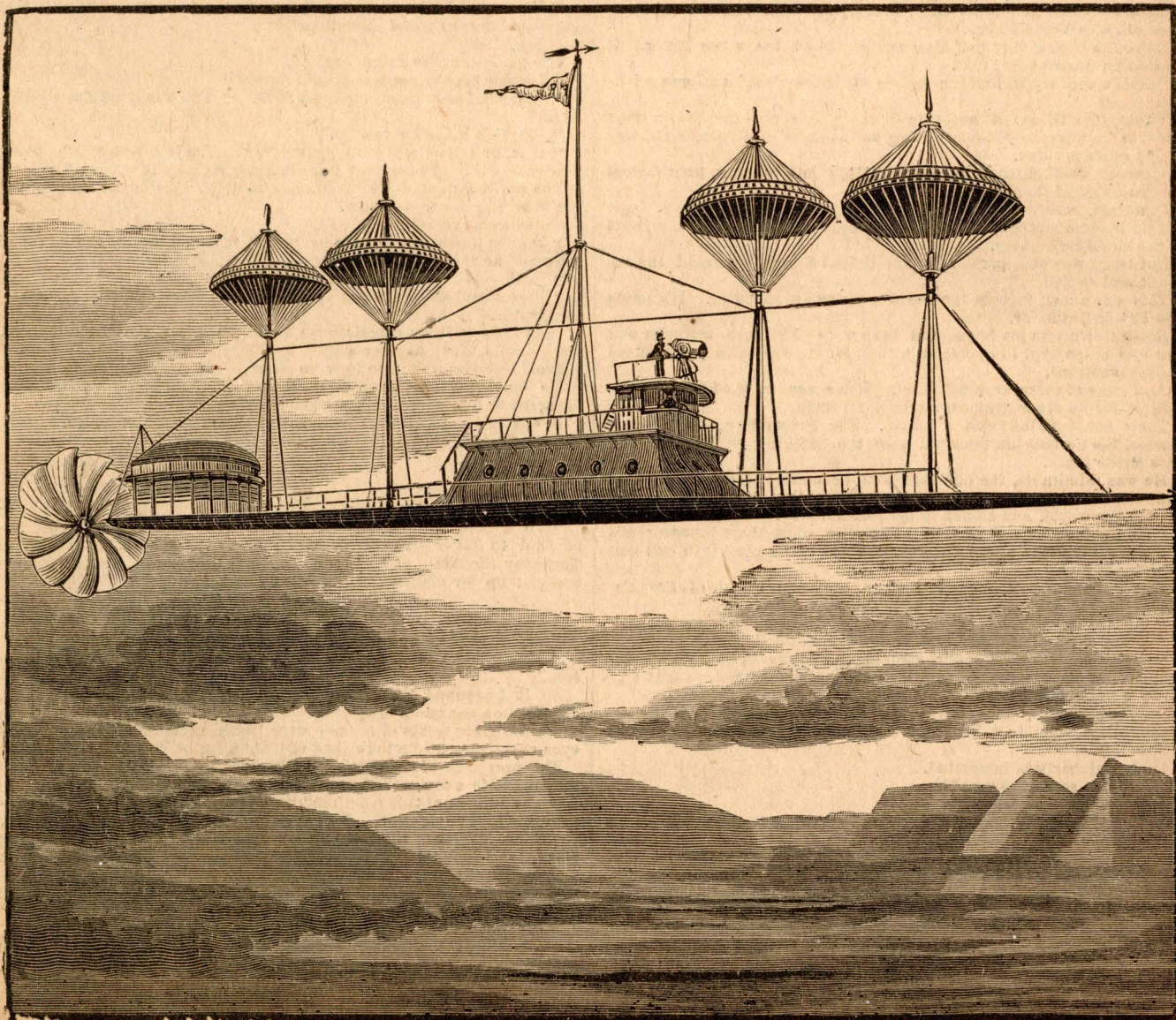
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Vol. III

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Frank Reade, Jr.'s Electric Air Racer; Or, AROUND THE GLOBE IN THIRTY DAYS.

By "NONAME."



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Frank Reade, Jr.'s Electric Air Racer;

OR,

AROUND THE GLOBE IN THIRTY DAYS.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Frank Reade, Jr., and His Electric Cruiser of the Lakes," "Frank Reade, Jr., and His Electric Prairie Schooner," "From Zone to Zone," "The Black Range," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

FRANK READE, JR., AND THE SCIENTIFIC BUREAU.

THERE had been much excitement throughout the country, concerning the feat of a smart young man who claimed to have traveled around the earth in seventy days, thus by far eclipsing the performance of Jules Verne's hero.

Indeed, a young lady had also accomplished the same thing. It seemed an unparalleled feat.

"Half a century will elapse before it is excelled!" said one scientist.

Twenty-five thousand miles in seventy days was certainly a most remarkable thing to consider, being an average of two hundred and fifty miles per day.

~~Samers and railroads had been pressed~~ into making their fastest in order to do this.

It certainly, it looked improbable that it could be eclipsed, at least until some method of transit more rapid than anything at present in use could be devised.

But there was one person in the United States, who read the account and smiled.

This was a man famous the world over as an inventor. His name was Frank Reade, Jr.

Readestown was his home, and here were the large factories and machine shops kept in operation by him for the exclusive manufacture of his inventions.

And none of these were patented. There was no need of this protection, for no other inventor could equal them.

Their construction was a secret. The Steam Man, the Electric Horses, the Submarine Boat, all were the offspring of Frank Reade, Jr.'s fertile brain.

He was inimitable, the one exclusive occupant of his field. This famous and talented young man read the account of the famous trip around the world, and smiled in his peculiar way.

"Humph!" he said. "I shall proceed to show them how to really make rapid transit around the world. I will accomplish it in half that time."

This statement was overheard by a scientific friend of Frank's, Prof. Malabar, who chanced to be in the room.

"What is that, Frank?" he exclaimed. "Do you really mean that?"

"Every word of it!" declared Frank, emphatically.

"Well," said Prof. Malabar, stroking his white beard, "I am not prepared to dispute you, Frank, for I am inclined to believe that anything is possible to you."

"By no means," said the young inventor, hastily. "There are many things beyond my ken, but this seems like a problem of very easy solution."

Prof. Malabar was interested.

"Are you serious, Frank?"

"Certainly!"

"Well, I—that is—you know you can trust me to the death. I am very curious to know your plans."

Frank smiled.

"How do you know that I have any?"

"I know that you must else you would not make the positive assertion which you have."

"I give you credit for very keen perception, Prof. Malabar!" said Frank. "In the main you are correct. I have been studying upon the problem of an aerial voyage around the globe!"

The professor leaped out of his chair. His face was aglow. "Shades of Cicero!" he gasped. "A voyage in the air? You mean by air-ship?"

"Yes."

"You—you don't mean to tell me that you have mastered that great problem of aerial navigation?"

"Yes, I do!"

The professor was much excited.

"I would like to see the plans!" he said.

"You shall see more," replied Frank. "You shall see the air-ship itself!"

"What! is it then a reality?"

"It is, or rather will be by to-morrow. The last rivets are being placed to-day. To-morrow you shall see my new invention."

The professor could hardly contain himself. He arose and paced the floor like one in a dream.

Suddenly he paused.

"Do you know what a mighty benefit that will be to the cause of science?" he asked. "Do you realize that, Frank?"

"Well, yes!" replied Frank, calmly.

"Why it will set the world by the ears. How fast will your air-ship travel?"

"As near as I can calculate we ought to make the flight around the globe in thirty days or a little less."

Prof. Malabar waited to hear no more.

He jammed his hat upon his head and left the office. An idea had occurred to him which he hastened to execute.

It was two days before Frank saw or heard from him again.

Then he received the following from New York City.

"BUREAU OF AMERICAN SCIENCES.
No. 18,—42nd Street.
New York City.

"TO FRANK READE, JR.—ESTEEMED SIR: You are cordially requested to favor this society with your presence upon the evening of Thursday the 20th at 8 o'clock. A very important matter will be brought up for discussion. Please to honor us.

"By order of
MILTIODES MONTMORENCY, President."

Frank read the communication, and smiled as he ejaculated:

"This is some of Malabar's work. Well, I will answer it in person."

So it happened that upon the evening in question Frank Reade, Jr., became the guest of the Scientific Bureau.

All the great lights of science were there. But the cynosure of all eyes and the most distinguished of them all was Frank Reade, Jr.

The president of the society, Miltiodes Montmorency, opened the meeting with a few well chosen remarks.

"The subject of this meeting," he went on to say, "is the discussion of aerial navigation. We have the word of one of our members, Cynthius Malabar, that the great and mighty problem has been solved, and that we have as our guest to-night the talented gentleman who claims the honor of having solved it."

There was a burst of applause, then Prof. Malabar led Frank Reade, Jr., forward upon the platform.

Every eye was upon the young inventor at that moment.

But he faced the audience coolly, and in an impressive manner made speech.

"It is true, as Prof. Malabar has told you, that I have solved the problem of aerial navigation," he said. "My air-ship is now completed, and I shall at an early day start upon my projected trip around the globe."

"What is the elevating power of your ship?" asked a man in the crowd.

"The rotascope."

"Then you do not employ gas?"

"Not at all."

With this Frank went on to in part describe the construction of his air-ship. All listened with interest.

"What time will it require for you to make the circumference?" asked one of the scientists.

"I hope to do it in thirty days!"

There was a buzz in the crowd.

"Have you reflected upon the mighty average per day of such a feat?" asked another.

"I have."

"It would mean a fraction over eight hundred miles per day."

"I am aware of that."

"Then you maintain that your air-ship can sail that fast?"

"I do, and even faster. Say—one thousand miles each twenty-four hours."

A sensation was created.

"That would accomplish the feat in twenty-five days?"

"Very true. But I am allowing for several stops."

"How many will you make?"

"Possibly four. Stop and think. One thousand miles every twenty-four hours is only an average of a little over forty miles per hour. My air-ship is constructed so as to make twice that speed under pressure."

The philosophy of Frank Reade, Jr.'s declaration was seen.

For the first time the undertaking had begun to assume feasible proportions. There was a favorable comment upon the young inventor's shrewdness.

"Forty miles per hour is only the average speed of a railway train," said one man. "An air-ship should be able easily to beat that. The carrier pigeon exceeds one hundred miles per hour."

"The air-ship will be stocked with provisions for the thirty days!" continued Frank. "I shall make four stops: the first at San Francisco, the second at Peking, China, the third at Constantinople, and the fourth at Terciera in the Azores Islands. All of these places are on or very near the fortieth parallel of latitude. This parallel I shall follow all the way around the earth!"

A tremor of intense excitement ran through the room.

There were men present who had witnessed the birth of many new and wonderful things in the present century. Yet all were grateful that they were alive to-day to witness the execution of this most wonderful feat ever attempted by man.

With much solemnity the president arose and proceeded to thank Mr. Reade for according them the honor of his visit and the explanations, and said in conclusion:

"It will be worth more to science than any opportunity of the past fifty years if you will permit one of our members to accompany you upon your voyage around the world!"

Frank arose and said:

"I am aware of the fact, and no man will serve the ends of science with a better spirit than I. I have invited your colleague, Prof. Malabar, to accompany me."

The audience rose in a body and cheered.

Unanimously thanks were accorded the young inventor, and then the meeting broke up.

But outside the hall Malabar importuned Frank and insisted upon accompanying him to the Grand Central Depot in a carriage.

"I can never fully express my gratitude to you, Frank, for your offer," he said. "I feel sure that we will succeed, and the world will know our fame henceforth."

"At least we will try," said Frank modestly. "I have all confidence in my air-ship."

"And so have I!" cried Malabar enthusiastically, as the carriage halted at the depot entrance.

Frank Reade, Jr., here took a train for Readestown without change.

CHAPTER II.

FLOYD'S OFFER—DESCRIPTION OF THE AIR-SHIP.

THERE had been no privacy enjoined upon the meeting of the Scientific Bureau, so several enterprising reporters had been present.

A detailed account of the proceedings was flashed over the telegraph wires of the country.

A tremendous sensation was created.

Varied enough were the opinions of people. Some believed that Frank would make the distance in twenty days; others that he would make it in thirty, while not a few pooh-poohed the whole thing as most ridiculous.

Among these skeptics was a New York gambler and sporting man, Gustavus Floyd.

"I tell you, sports," he cried one night in the Hoffman House bar-room, "Gus Floyd don't hit anything but a dead certainty nowadays. I'm willing to bet fifty thousand dollars, four to five, that the air-ship don't get around the globe in forty days."

In an instant several gamblers sprang up.

"I'll take a slice of that!" cried one.

"And I'll place a thousand," said another.

So it happened that in less than two days Gus Floyd had all his money placed at the requisite odds.

The gambler chuckled as he one day boarded a train for Readestown.

Frank was busy in making preparations for the start when Floyd entered with a swagger.

"Mr. Reade, eh?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Frank.

Floyd threw down his card.

"Well, sir," said the young inventor, curtly. "What can I do for you?"

"I have come to see you upon very important biz," said the gambler, slangily. "You understand? I don't care about its falling into other ears."

"You are safe here!" said Frank. "Go ahead!"

With this the gambler thrust his thumbs into the arm holes of his vest and came nearer.

Lowering his voice, he said:

"You like money?"

"What?"

"But in course you do. Well, now, friend, I've laid the wires for a big pull."

"What do you mean?" asked Frank.

"Oh, I see you are not a sporting man. Well, in other words, I've got the field agin you on this trip around the world."

An inkling of the fellow's meaning began to dawn upon Frank.

"Oh, I think I understand you," he said. "You have made a bet against my success?"

"Exactly."

"Well," said Frank, slowly, "I am sorry for you."

"Ye are, eh?"

"Yes; that is if the amount is large."

"Fifty thousand."

"Ahem!" said Frank, dryly, "then you are that much out."

Floyd drew a deep whistle.

"In course I am, unless you help me," he said, significantly.

"I help you?"

"Exactly."

"How can I do that?"

"Look here!" said Floyd, earnestly; "there's a big stake fer us. Twenty thousand is yours. One-half—see? All you have got to do is to let time beat ye."

For a moment Frank was undecided how to act. Then he adopted what was perhaps the wisest and best course.

He advanced to the door and opened it.

"Excuse me, Mr. Floyd," he said politely, but firmly, "this is the way out."

The gambler looked stunned. He could hardly believe his senses.

"What?" he gasped. "You refuse the offer? Twenty thousand clean?"

"You mistake your man, sir!" said Frank, calmly. "Money will not buy me. I am not a gambler, and if I were ever so poor I would not lend myself to so disreputable a scheme to make it."

Floyd gazed hard at Frank. The young inventor was in earnest.

"But it is only a speculation. If the others win they'll take my money!"

"All the more fool you for wagering it!" said Frank.

"Then you decline?"

"I do."

"Suppose I increase the amount?"

"Not for ten times that amount."

"But—see the hole I'm in," whined Floyd. "I wouldn't have bet if I hadn't been sure I could do business with you."

"There is no use to discuss the subject further," said Frank, resolutely. "My time is valuable."

A wave of passion swept across Floyd's face.

His eyes gleamed with sinister purpose, and he lifted his clenched fist with a hiss, as he cried:

"That is all right, my fine friend. I'm in the hole just now, but Gus Floyd always pulls out. You'll hear from me again, and I'll bet you two to one now for any amount that yer blasted air-ship don't make it in forty days for mighty good reasons."

"Enough!" cried Frank, angrily. "I will endure none of your threats. I warn you to leave at once!"

Frank touched a push button.

The next moment a door flew open and two men bounded into the room.

Both were short and stout. One was a negro as black as ebony, and the other was an Irishman with a comical mug and a shock of red hair.

"Barney and Pomp, please to show this man the door," said Frank.

"If he gives you trouble sound the police alarm!"

The wrath of Floyd could not be adequately depicted in words. He was literally beside himself.

"Curses on you!" he roared, shaking his fist at Frank. "Ye've not done with me. I might have done ye some good, but now, curse ye, I'll ruin ye! Mark my words! Gus Floyd always wins."

"Go an wid yer bluff!" cried Barney, the Irishman. "Share, I'll break a shillalegh over yer thick head!"

"Jes' yo' take yo' walkin' ticket," said Pomp, the negro, threateningly. "If yo' don't, we will be 'bliged to fro' yo' out, sah!"

Floyd did not wait for this. He made a hasty exit.

Then Barney and Pomp returned to their master.

"Kain't say I likes de looks ob dat chap, Marse Frank!" cried Pomp. "Wha'ebber he come from?"

"Bejabers, I was tempted to land him one in the jaw fer his impudence!" cried Barney.

"I've no doubt he is a bad character," rejoined Frank. "However, we are well rid of him."

"Don' know 'bout dat," said Pomp, shaking his head. "I done fink he do as he say an' come back agin."

"Begorra, if he does we'll break the neck av him!" cried Barney. Barney and Pomp were old and trusted servants.

They had been long in the employ of the Reade family. They had served Frank's father, a distinguished inventor before him.

Upon all his famous trips Frank had taken Barney and Pomp. At this moment and just as the discussion of Floyd had ceased, the door suddenly opened and in came Malabar.

The professor was as gay as a lark, and trod as lightly as a school-boy, he was in such good spirits.

"Heigho, Frank, here I am!" he cried. "Are you glad to see me?"

"Certainly," replied the young inventor. "I suppose you are all prepared for the great trip?"

"You are right I am."

"Good enough!"

"When shall we sail?"

"To-morrow."

"But you promised to show me the air-ship."

"Then I will keep my promise!" said Frank. "Come this way!"

He led the way to the main building of the foundry. Here, in a high, truss-roofed building, was the latest triumph of Frank Reade, Jr.'s, inventive genius.

And that it was a triumph could be seen at a glance. The air-ship rested upon wooden stays, and was all ready to be carried into the outer air.

"You will see by the lines," observed Frank, "that I have planned the Needle for speed, and I think she will be a flyer."

"The Needle!" ejaculated Malabar. "She is well named."

The air-ship was fully one hundred and twenty feet in length. Her hull was cylindrical, and, except in the center, was round and slender. The material was platinum and hardened steel, in thinly rolled plates.

The bow of the Needle was a long, pointed ram. Above the hull rose four hollow rotascope shafts, to a height of forty feet. Upon the top of these were the revolving rotascopes themselves, driven at fearful speed by electric engines.

At the rear of the air-ship were two blade-like plates, between which was suspended the shaft of the propeller. This was made of thin steel.

The main body of the air-ship consisted of a cabin, one-fourth of the length of the hull.

There were circular windows in this, with plate glass, and around the deck ran a hand rail.

At the forward end of the deck was the pilot-house. Upon the roof of this was a powerful electric search-light.

This is a meager description of the exterior of the air-ship. The interior was vastly different. One long cabin or saloon was elegantly furnished with all the accessories of a drawing-room.

Besides this there were a number of staterooms, a dining-room and kitchen, or cook room, where Pomp officiated.

Forward was the most important compartment of all, where the electrical machinery was in operation.

This was a wonderful sight, and Prof. Malabar consumed much time in inspecting it. There was much in detail explained by Frank of the appointments of the air-ship.

This would be tedious here, and we will wait for it to come up in the course of our story.

In the gun-room there was a stand of arms of all kinds, and a goodly store of ammunition.

Also provisions sufficient to last the party of four for two months were safely stored on board.

"Enough!" cried Prof. Malabar. "I am more than satisfied. I consider the Needle the greatest wonder on earth to-day. I am proud to be enabled to take a trip aboard her."

"Well, you will be on hand at ten to-morrow?" asked Frank.

"I will."

"Good! We shall sail at that hour."

They turned and left the building. But as they did, a dark form glided from the shadows, and a hissing voice not audible to them arose.

"At ten to-morrow, eh? Perhaps you will, but Gus Floyd will bet another fifty thousand that you won't!"

CHAPTER III.

ATTEMPT TO CRIPPLE THE AIR-SHIP—THE START.

It was indeed the gambler Floyd who uttered these words. He had managed to sneak back into the grounds and had gained the buildings. There was a dark purpose uppermost in his mind.

He was not disposed to lose his fifty thousand dollars without a struggle.

His only way to win was to prevent the air-ship from making its wonderful voyage around the globe.

Floyd was unscrupulous.

To carry a desired end, human life could not stand in his way. There was murder in his heart.

But fortunately Frank Reade, Jr. was not in a position at all assailable. He accompanied Malabar to the street.

The latter took his own cab to the railway station. Frank's private carriage was at hand and he entered it and was driven home. The would-be assassin lingering in the shadows gave a baffled curse.

"That jig is up!" muttered Floyd. "There is nothing left but to try the other!"

He slunk into the deeper shadows and approached the store-house. Barney and Pomp were in there.

The Celt and the darky were the best of friends, but each was fond of nagging and playing practical jokes upon the other.

They were engaged in a friendly scuffle upon the deck of the air-ship.

"Shure, that's a foul hold yez have!" spluttered Barney. "Take yez elbow out av me ribs!"

"Hub! It am jes' as fair as any yo' has, I'ish!"

"Yez niver'll throw me, anyway. Hi, there! Whisht! Aisy it is!"

And around the deck the two wrestling jokers went. Neither noticed the dark form which was hovering in the shadows by the wheel-house.

Finally the question of supremacy was settled, and Barney and Pomp prepared to leave the store-house.

"Shure, it's off we'll be ter-morrer, naygur," cried the Celt, "an' divil a bit will I be sorry fer it."

"Yo' am right dar, chille!"

Suddenly Barney gave a sharp cry.

"Phwat's that?" he cried. "Upon me soul, I belave it's a man!"

"A man yo' say?" exclaimed Pomp, excitedly. "Wha'ebber yo' mean, chile?"

"Shure there's some omadhaun hiding beyant the wheel-house!" yelled Barney. "Go to the roight, naygur!"

Pomp dashed to the right and Barney to the left. Around the wheel-house they went. They met, but no other being was in sight. Barney was mystified.

"Bejabers, that's quare!" he muttered.

"Wha' am de mattah wif yo'?" ejaculated Pomp. "I don' see nuffin wrong anywhere?"

"Bejabers, where is the spalpeen gone to?" gasped Barney. "Shure he was fernest here. I'll stake me loife an that."

"Hub! Yo' mus' be color blind!"

"Not so bloind as yez moight think, naygur!" retorted Barney. "I know when I see a thing. Shure he must have gone into the air!"

Then both jokers were given a sudden appalling shock.

From the engine-room under the wheel-house there came a terrific crash. Sharp lightning flashes played up and down the rotascope shafts. The air-ship rocked, and the electrical machinery whirled.

"Fo' de lan' sakes wha' am dat?" gasped Pomp.

"Begorra, it's the wurruk av ther divil whom I see a minute ago!" yelled Barney, "bad cess to him!"

And into the pilot-house Barney sprang. Down the narrow stairs he rushed.

When he reached the engine room, a flood of electric light was all about. The machinery was whirling and buzzing.

But a direful sight rewarded Barney's gaze.

He saw that the electric gauge and indicators, with the motor lever, were smashed all into a mass. Upon them lay an ax just as it had struck.

While doubled up in a heap upon the floor was the figure of a man. Barney embraced the situation at a glance.

"Bejabers, it's wan av thim cranks!" he yelled. "Shure an' he thought he'd spile the air-ship, an' if I'm not mistaken it's spiled him!"

Gus Floyd, for he it was, lay like a log upon the floor of the engine room.

He had received a terrific shock from the batteries when he struck the blow which he intended should wreck the machinery of the air-ship.

He had failed to accomplish the damage that he had hoped to. He lay like one dead till Barney turned him over.

"Bad cess to the omadhaun!" he cried, "it's the chap that threatened Mither Frank awhile ago!"

Floyd now opened his eyes and gasped:

"What's the matter?"

"Be jabers yez ought to know from experience!" cried Barney.

"Whisky!" gasped the stunned man. "Give me whisky!"

Barney poured a few drops between his lips. Floyd instantly revived.

He was only stunned anyhow.

"What will you do with me?" he asked in a maudlin way.

"Shure we ought to kill yez!" cried Barney, angrily, "but I reckon we'll jest hand yez over to a policeman!"

"No, no!" cried Floyd, desperately. "Let me go. I'm all right."

"All right, are yez?" cried Barney, angrily. "Sure, yez have nigh spiled our machinery. I'll give yez to the police an' Mither Frank will complain of yez to-morrow."

Floyd was now quite well recovered. He made no further speech at the moment. He affected great helplessness.

He knew that it would be fatal to his plans to fall into the hands of the police just now.

But he allowed Barney and Pomp to lead him out into the yard.

Then quick as a flash he suddenly turned and dealt Pomp a terrific blow in the face. The darky dropped.

Before Barney had time to act the villain struck him, and then breaking away dashed for the street.

"Whurroo!" yelled Barney. "Shtop thafe! Shtop him some wan!"

But there was no one to stop him. The shades of night had rapidly fallen and Floyd sought refuge in these.

He made good his escape.

At once Barney pressed the signal of alarm connected with Frank Reade, Jr.'s residence.

The latter was instantly aroused and started full haste for the machine shop. When he arrived there he found Barney and Pomp holding guard over the air-ship.

"Shure the omadhaun meant to destroy it," cried Barney. "It's nigh spiled the machinery is, I'm afther thinkin'."

Frank made a hasty examination. He found to his relief, however, that no harm which would require any great time to repair had been done.

The necessary repairs could be made in a few hours, and he set about doing them.

It was near daybreak when the job was completed. But the airship was not to be delayed.

But Frank regretted one thing.

"I am sorry the villain escaped," he said. "He deserved punishment."

And thus the matter ended. But Gus Floyd had not done yet.

He learned that the airship was to stop at Constantinople. He believed that in a foreign land he could cope with the airship's crew better.

"If an accident can only delay it in Constantinople," he muttered, "I shall win my wager."

He knew that Frank was going to the west. The villain was sure that he could reach the Turkish city before the air-ship by going east and across Europe.

So the very next steamer took him from America's shores.

But the voyagers had not done with Floyd yet. They were destined yet to hear from him.

A large crowd gathered the next day to witness the ascension. At ten o'clock all was ready and all were on board.

Then Frank went into the pilot house and opened the electric switch. The rotascopes began to revolve and the air-ship to ascend.

Up like a mighty bird it rose—up and up, and the plaudits of the multitude below died out.

When Frank joined the others at the rail the town below looked like a lilliputian village, and the people like flies.

Far above was a cloud. Into this the air-ship sprung, and then mist was all about. The earth had receded from view.

Prof. Malabar, who had been intently watching all, drew a deep breath.

"Wonderful!" he ejaculated. "Truly this is an experience worth a fortune to a man of science."

Frank headed the air-ship due west. He was about on the 40th parallel now and meant to keep it all the way around the world.

He allowed the air-ship to descend from the cloud so that the earth was once more in view.

Malabar was in the best of spirits, and paced the deck rubbing his hands and giving expression to delighted remarks.

"It is all very grand!" he cried. "Ah, what a glorious opportunity! When shall we make San Francisco, Frank?"

"In three days, I hope," said Frank.

"Ah, it would take a railroad train over a week. Grand! You will stop there—about how long?"

"Only a few hours."

"And then—"

"Straight for Pekin."

"Upon that flight we shall be most of the way above the ocean."

"Nearly all the way."

The professor made a wry face.

"That will be rather monotonous," he muttered. "However, we shall stop there!"

"Yes," replied Frank, "and I have no doubt you will find much of interest in the largest city in China."

"I know I shall," rejoined Malabar. "I can assure you of that."

Frank had set the engines at work rapidly. They were almost at full speed already.

If he was to make the circumference of the earth in thirty days, there was certainly need of expeditious movement.

The air-ship was moving along like a meteor through space, and Barney and Pomp were engaged in scouring the brass work of the deck rail, when Prof. Malabar came along to the pilot-house where Frank was engaged.

"Frank!" he said, sharply.

"What?" asked the young inventor.

He stepped out of the pilot-house and saw an expression of alarm upon the face of the scientist. Malabar pointed to the horizon.

"Look there!" he said.

Frank saw also that its extent was most unusual. Its character was almost cyclonic.

Certainly this was a peril to be dreaded. The young inventor knew that ample precaution must be taken.

Of course the air-ship had been constructed with a view to buffeting the storms of the upper atmosphere.

Yet these hurricanes, being of an unusual severity, must be avoided if possible. In their clutches the air-ship might at any moment go to pieces.

Death would be the certain fate of everybody on board in face of such a contingency.

Frank looked at the electric indicator and saw that they were now at an elevation of full four thousand feet.

Of course this height could easily be increased and with perfect safety. But would this put them above the storm?

Frank, however, did not lose time in weighing the matter. He at once adopted the safest and best move.

As after events proved, however, it was of no material aid. He pressed the rotascope lever and the air-ship went up.

Up, up, it shot. And now the earth was lost to view beneath fleecy clouds far below.

Frank all the while studied the rapidly advancing storm.

He saw that it was coming with great force. Also he realized the futility of trying to get above the storm.

This would have been possible only by going beyond the limit of the atmosphere and into the icy regions of space. There life could not have been supported a moment.

The young inventor therefore saw that he had no alternative but to face the storm.

Accordingly all was made ship-shape. Barney and Pomp cleared the deck of awnings and all loose effects.

"If I had seen this storm coming in season," declared Frank, "we would never have left Readestown until it was over."

Prof. Malabar was too intent on studying the wonderful developments of the storm to feel any apprehension of danger.

Frank shouted to him.

"Come into the pilot house, Malabar!" he cried. "If you don't it may be the worse for you!"

"Will it be as bad as that?" cried the professor.

"You shall see!" declared Frank. "A storm of that kind is a terrible thing to face. You can see it just as well through the pilot house windows."

"Oh, well, I am agreeable!" declared the professor, readily. "Lead the way, I'll follow."

In the pilot house Frank had just time to fasten the door. The scene now was a terrific one.

It was as if they were submerged in inky blackness, and the light of day went out in an instant.

There was a fearful roar and crash like the booming of artillery, and then the air-ship seemed seized by giant hands and whirled through space.

The shock was a terrible one and precipitated the air-ship into the deepest of the clouds. It seemed for a moment as if the Needle must be smashed and fall to the earth.

Every one of the inmates of the pilot house were thrown from their feet. They clung to objects of a stationary sort and were unable to do aught else.

But Frank knew that this could last but a few moments.

It was the first rude shock of the storm. As soon as it was over the air-ship would ride easier, providing, of course, that she weathered it.

At first a horrible doubt had entered Frank's mind as to her ability to do so.

But already the air-ship seemed to become more buoyant and there was every indication now that she would ride out the storm.

But yet the roaring and crashing of the elements was something terrible to hear.

A more terrifying position could hardly be imagined by the human mind.

But, as suddenly as it had come, the total darkness lifted. Objects became visible about.

The Needle was yet in the clutches of the tempest. She was hurled and tossed about furiously.

But her crew were able to regain their feet and become cognizant of their true position.

This was worth something.

Frank was the first to recover. The young inventor made his way to the window and looked out.

All was a tossing tempest of rain and sleet.

The cold was most intense, and this he knew to be evidence that they were at great altitude.

Frank consulted the barometer.

The tube was already beginning to clear.

"The storm will soon be over," he exclaimed. "We have experienced the worst."

"Indeed, we have been fortunate," declared Malabar.

"You are right."

"If we strike another storm like this, I shall be surprised!"

But Frank shook his head.

"The storms of the tropics are more to be feared," he said. "They are fiercer and accompanied by more of the cyclonic element. We will pray not to meet them."

"Amen!" exclaimed Malabar, heartily; "but are we all alive?"

"So far as I can see. How are you, Barney and Pomp?"

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE STORM.

FRANK gazed in the direction indicated by the scientist and saw at once the cause of his fears.

Mighty storm clouds had crept up toward the zenith. A fearful storm was on the tapis.

Barney was holding onto his cranium, and Pomp was nursing his shins.

"Begorra, I thought me head was smashed that toime, fer sure!" cried the Celt. "I see siventeen hundred different kinds av stars. Shure, I've niver seen the loike since Mike Hooligan basted me ten year agoone wud his shillelah at Donnybrook."

"Golly!" grinned Pomp. "I done flink mah shins am mos' bruk wif de thumpin' dey jes' got!"

"Whurroo!" exclaimed Barney, scornfully, "I'd niver make a row over sich a small thing as that."

"I don't know about that, Barney," laughed Frank. "I'm inclined to think that Pomp's shins are just as sensitive as your head."

"Dat dey am, Marse Frank!" cried Pomp. "Huh! if I was yo', I'ish, I'd neber suy nuffin 'bout mah head."

"Bejabers, do yez mean that fer an insinooation?" cried Barney, angrily.

"Yo' may take it jes' de way fo' to suit yo', chile."

There would have been a ruction then and there but for Frank. The young inventor tabooed it.

But Barney was heard to mutter under his breath:

"Hum! yez kin jes' bet I'll squar accounts wid dat naygur at der fust opportunity or me name ain't Barney O'Shea!"

It could not be said that the storm had put the air-ship back any, though she was a little to southward of her proper course.

But Frank was nevertheless disposed to put on all speed. The air-ship made speed and justified her owner's most sanguine expectation.

"I hope to beat the recoed by several days!" declared Frank. "I see no reason why we should not."

"I hope we will," declared Malabar, enthusiastically, "but what do you suppose our friends at home are thinking just now, Frank?"

"Well, I hardly know," said Frank, with a smile.

"Well, I'll wager they are thinking of us and wondering just when we will reach San Francisco."

"We should make it in three days."

"Whew! Twenty-five hundred miles in that time?" ejaculated the professor. "That seems wonderful!"

"Let us see how far I shall come from the mark," said Frank.

Malabar did not attempt to express any difference of opinion with the young inventor, but secretly he did not believe it possible to make that distance in the time named.

However, the Needle did fairly fly through the atmosphere. The rotascopes hardly revolved, so swift was the impetus of the propeller. The first night of the voyage was one never forgotten.

There were many novel experiences and sights. The electric search-light was tried with interesting results.

Thrown against distant clouds, the effect was most enchanting.

The clouds, under the illusive glare of the electric light, assumed a solid appearance, and it seemed as if the air-ship at times was charging into a solid wall of stone.

"Look out!" once Malabar cried. "We're into a mountain, Frank!"

But the next moment the prow of the air-ship struck the apparent mountain wall and went clean through it.

Frank laughed at the professor's fears, for he knew that they were too far from the earth to be in danger of a collision.

At times the air-ship seemed to be traversing deep valleys between mighty beetling cliffs.

In fact the scene was gorgeous beyond all description.

Now the Needle floated upon a sea of translucent water, then went charging down over rugged heights, only to leave all behind in a bewildering haze.

"Truly this is worth a life time to witness!" cried Prof. Malabar.

"I am the luckiest man in America to-day."

Flashing down to the earth far below the search-light revealed a most wonderful spectacle.

There were prisms in the atmosphere rainbow like in their glory.

"What must the people down below there think of this display?" cried Malabar.

"Very likely to-morrow's press will record the wonderful luminous meteor seen in this part of the world," laughed Frank.

"But will any of them guess the real truth?"

"I doubt it!"

"I would like to be down there and see the display just for a moment. Of course they cannot see the air-ship!"

"By no means!"

Tiring of watching all this curious display, the party finally adjourned to the forward deck.

Frank lashed the wheel and came out of the pilot-house. Then Barney and Pomp furnished entertainment.

And good hands they were at it, too.

Barney played the fiddle and Pomp the banjo. And thus the hours were beguiled until past midnight.

It was the first night aboard the air-ship. Just after midnight all were in bed except the one left on watch. Barney and Pomp exchanged in this.

CHAPTER V.

AN ACCIDENT TO THE AIR-SHIP.

BARNEY kept watch the first half of the night and Pomp the last. Daylight found Frank and the professor once more on deck.

Malabar had one keen regret.

He would have liked to travel near the earth and occasionally make a descent.

But it must be remembered that this trip of the Needle was against time, and there was need of hustling.

Four stops were to be made anyway.

Yet there was always enough of interest on board the air-ship to keep one occupied.

Many strange things occurred.

Once, as Malabar was sitting by the rail, he gave a great cry.

The others instantly came rushing out.

"What's the matter?" asked Frank Reade, Jr., not without alarm.

"Look!" cried Malabar, pointing downward. It required but a glance to see the cause of the professor's surprise.

There just below the hull of the air-ship was visible a huge bird.

It was flying parallel with the air-ship, and equally as fast.

It was a monster eagle of the very largest species.

As it swept along, it seemed interested in the air-ship.

"Whew!" cried Frank. "That is the largest eagle I ever saw."

"He is a monster," agreed Malabar, "and I should say he had come to make our acquaintance."

"It certainly looks that way."

"Bejabers, he's coming fer the air-ship!" cried Barney.

This was true.

The monster bird was flying straight for the hull of the Needle.

With an eerie cry it dashed against the metal surface.

"Golly! I done flink he hurt hissef if he tries fo' to whip dis air-ship!" cried Pomp.

Indeed, it looked as if this was the purpose of the bird.

Its whole manner was combative, and again and again it dashed against the side of the ship.

"That is queer!" exclaimed Frank. "That is certainly a pugnacious bird. But I hardly see what he hopes to accomplish."

"Doubtless it gratifies him," cried Prof. Malabar. "And that is enough!"

Suddenly the eagle took an upward flight, and cleared the rail of the air-ship.

All started back in alarm, for it looked as if the bird was about to dash at them.

But it did not, taking a higher sweep, and striking against the rotascopes. And this brought the sky king to grief.

The rotascope blade caught the bird's wings.

In an instant they were broken, and with a scream of agony, the eagle fell upon the deck of the air-ship.

Frank quickly dispatched it. It was a monster of its specie. Prof. Malabar consumed some hours in removing the skin for stuffing purposes.

"In twenty hours we shall sight the city of San Francisco!" cried Frank, the next morning. "I would like to know if that is not fast traveling."

"It is wonderful," agreed Malabar, "but of course you mean if nothing happens to us meanwhile."

"I see no reason why anything should happen," said Frank. "Of course there is the unexpected."

The words had barely left his lips when a snapping, whirring sound came from the engine room.

The air-ship began to rock violently.

"My God!" gasped Frank. "Is it possible that calamity is to come so soon?"

"Something has happened to the machinery," suggested Malabar in terror.

But at that moment Barney's terrified voice was heard in the cabin.

"Och, Misther Frank! Cum, sor, as quick as iver yez can! Shure, there's the divil to pay!"

Frank waited for no more.

He reached the stairway, and with one leap was in the engine room.

He saw at once that the machinery was broken, and was only half working. The air-ship was bound to fall.

"My soul!" he gasped. "What is broken, Barney?"

"Shure, sor, I don't know."

"What caused it?"

"That I don't know, sor."

Frank knew there was no time to investigate just then.

The air-ship was falling, and it behooved him to look and see where she was about to alight.

So back he went to the deck. A glance over the rail was sufficient.

The earth was scarce half a mile below. He saw a mighty prairie cut up into buffalo wallows.

"Utah or Nevada," he muttered. "It is all right, so long as we do not settle into any lake of water."

The air-ship had settled quite fast. Fearing that it might strike the earth too hard, Frank pressed a spring which threw out some parachute wings from the side.

This lowered the Needle as gently as could be desired.

She touched the prairie lightly.

Then Barney and Pomp threw out the anchors. All looked dismayed.

"At least we can go back home and start over again," said Prof. Malabar.

"Never!" declared Frank, resolutely. "I will make up the lost time in some way. Even if we lose a day here we will not be behind."

"Think you the machinery can be repaired?"

"I see no reason why. In fact I cannot understand the breakage, for I was ready to take my oath when we left home that all the parts were perfect."

"It is too bad!"

"Ay, but it might have been worse. It is very fortunate indeed, that we did not descend into the Pacific Ocean."

Malabar shrugged his shoulders.

"Is there a possibility of another break?" he asked.

Frank laughed at this.

"It will be an easy matter for you to return home now," he said.

"You will avoid the risk?"

"Never!" cried Malabar, emphatically. "I'm in it to the end. Nothing shall change my decision. Live or die, survive or perish, I shall keep on!"

"Good for you!" cried Frank. "Let us hope this will not happen again. Now to investigate!"

The air-ship was safely anchored and Frank went below.

It did not take him long to find the seat of trouble.

Wedge in between some delicate cogs was the crushed remnants of a hammer. How it got there was for a time a mystery.

Frank called both Barney and Pomp down.

"Now," he said, severely, "here is something that looks like criminal carelessness. Can you tell how the hammer came there?"

"Bejabers I can't, sor," replied Barney, bluntly.

Pomp looked at the hammer for a moment thoughtfully, and then said, slowly:

"I done fink I kin tell yo', sah."

"Ah, Pomp!" exclaimed Frank, "how was it?"

"Don' know as I kin tell yo' who frowed de hammer in dere, sah," continued Pomp, "but does yo' see dat lily tit ob a shelf up dar, sah?"

"Yes."

The shelf in question was just above this part of the machinery.

"Well, sah, I jes' remember ob seeing yo' put dat hammer up dar yo'sef, sah, some days ago, afore de air-ship was taken out ob de store-house, sah."

"Yes, but how did it get into the cogs?" asked Frank.

Then all came to him.

He put up his hand and examined the shelf carefully.

There was no guard upon it and it was perfectly smooth. Moreover it slanted downward just a trifle.

"Ah, I think I can see it all," he said, comprehensively. "It is all a curious accident. The jarring motion of the air-ship probably caused the hammer to fall—and it gradually worked into the cogs. That explains it all."

The question now was as to how easy it was going to be to repair the break.

Frank examined the cogs carefully and with brightening face said: "It's all right. Only one cog is broken. I have a duplicate in the cabin and it will be the work of only a few hours to replace it. In the meanwhile——"

He ceased speaking.

All at the moment were in the engine-room. The deck at the moment was clear.

And as they were so deeply engrossed in the question of the break, not one thought of any possible danger.

But a sound now came to the hearing of all which gave them a mighty start.

It was the distant, shrill warwhoop of an Indian. There was no mistaking that cry.

Frank remembered that they were upon the plains, in the very wildest part of the wild and woolly West.

The danger could be easily seen.

"Quick!" cried the young inventor, "follow me!"

Straight for the gun room he rushed. The others followed him.

From a stand Frank seized a rifle and a belt of cartridges. Each of the others did the same.

Then they quickly gained the deck.

They were not a moment too soon. Within ten feet of the rail were half a score of painted savages.

With a wild whoop, they turned their ponies and dashed away to the cover of a roll in the prairie.

"Mercy on us!" cried Malabar; "they came near boarding us!"

"It was a close call," admitted Frank, with a shiver.

"The result——"

"Ugh! We might all have been butchered in cold blood."

"Then you think they would have attacked us?"

"If they had got aboard? Most certainly. They are Apaches."

"Begorra, I'd loike to tumble over that man jist over the hilltop yonder," cried Barney.

The Celt raised his rifle as if anxious to fire. But Frank interposed.

"No," he said. "Let them fire the first shot. We are not in the best of positions. Our forte is the defensive!"

"I believe you are right," agreed Malabar. "Ah! What is that?"

The Apaches were all behind the roll in the prairie.

Now however, to the surprise of all, one of them was seen to advance with what looked like a flag of truce in his hands.

He was on foot and came fearlessly toward the air-ship.

"Ah!" cried Frank, "they ask a truce. Let us see what it means."

The savage advanced rapidly toward the air-ship now.

CHAPTER VI.

ATTACKED BY APACHES.

FRANK stepped out to meet the red truce bearer.

He was a burly specimen of his race, with the usual coarse type of features and beady black eyes.

He halted when within twenty feet of Frank, and gave him a searching, critical and half insolent glance.

"Well!" said Frank sharply, "what do you want?"

"White man on Indians' land," said the red scoundrel with a frown.

"He surrender to Black Eagle. No do so, kill quick!"

The wretch drew his hand significantly across his throat.

Frank drew himself up haughtily.

"Is that the message your chief sends?" he cried forcibly. "Then go back to him and tell him to go his way and not trouble us, or it will be the worse for him."

The Apache showed his teeth and made reply:

"White man hab heap queer wagon. Gib wagon to red man he go free. See!"

Frank saw at a glance that it was useless to attempt to treat with or make friends with these red rascals.

It was plain that they believed that the white men were traveling across the prairie in some sort of a queer wagon.

It was also plain that they considered the white man in their power. If he did not surrender, they believed it an easy matter to capture him.

"I'll fool them!" thought Frank, ironically. "I'll give them a lesson."

But aloud he said:

"I don't propose to give you even a button, my greasy friend. Go back to your chief with that word from me!"

The Apache was still stoical.

"White man got 'baccey; got fire-water?" he asked. "Injun want some!"

"Well, you'll have to want!" said Frank, sternly. "Go away, you greasy dog!"

The truce-bearer turned and made his way back to his companions. Evidently the word he carried did not suit them, for a yell of rage came from their throats.

"The fun has only just begun!" said Frank, calmly, as he returned to the air-ship's deck. "Now we must be ready for music."

All waited behind the cover of the air-ship's rail for any demonstration upon the part of the Apaches.

They had not long to wait.

With fierce wild yells, the savages began the usual tactics of riding at full speed in a circle about the air-ship. A picturesque spectacle they made.

At first this circle was quite large, but gradually they began to draw it closer.

Frank understood the game well. He smiled ironically.

"If you can draw a bead on any of the rascals, do so!" he cried.

"Bejabers, I'll thry that one wid the striped blanket!" cried Barney. With which he threw his rifle to his shoulder and fired. The bullet went true to the mark.

The redskin dropped from his pony, which went careering aw riderless. A savage yell went up from the other savages.

Pomp now tried his skill, and with good effect, too.

Another savage fell. Two of the red fiends were disposed of.

The effect of this upon the savages could be plainly seen. The red man is ever a coward in the open field.

Frank and the professor now fired.

One more Apache was brought down. Of a sudden the savages changed tactics.

"Look out!" cried Frank; "they are coming for us."

Suddenly, with one mad chorus of yells, the savages massed and charged down upon the air-ship.

They came on like the wind, and it seemed for a moment as if they were certain to collide with the ship.

It was a critical moment.

As fast as the repeaters could be worked the Needle's crew poured volley after volley into the midst of the horde.

The ground was strewn with dead and dying Apaches. Certainly it was a costly charge for them.

Within fifty yards of the air-ship they reined in their horses and dismounted. All was done in a flash.

"Into the cabin!" shouted Frank, who saw that their position on the deck was far too exposed.

All obeyed. They were not a moment too soon, for as it was Barney got a bullet through the sleeve of his coat. It was a narrow escape.

It was plain that the savages intended to gain the deck of the air-ship. This purpose must be frustrated.

The volley given them by the air-ship's defenders was most destructive. It did not seem as if the savages could stand before it.

One tall, brawny chief seemed to be their leader, and was indomitable.

He urged them on fiercely. So conspicuous was he that Barney singled him out and made a target of him.

But the wretch seemed to bear a charmed life.

No effort of Barney's would seem to bring him down. The Celt was baffled.

"Bejabers it's moighty quarel!" he muttered. "Shure it's a good thure aim I'm ather takin'."

The battle, however, was too furious to last long.

The Apaches, seeing their comrades falling about them, even at the very moment when they seemed likely to gain the air-ship's deck, took fright and fled.

With great confusion they retreated to their ponies, and leaving nearly a score of their number dead and wounded behind them, they made off.

It was a signal victory for the air-ship's crew.

Cheers went up, which were answered by a baffled yell from the Apaches. The latter rode beyond range and then halted.

Here, behind the cover of a buffalo wallow they remained for some hours. In the meanwhile Frank was busy adjusting the broken cog.

Darkness was now fast coming on. For a time it seemed as if they must pass the night upon the spot.

All began to feel anxious.

Not one in the party but realized the seriousness of the situation. With the cover of darkness the savages could make a more concerted attack.

And perhaps a successful one. There was no doubt but that this was what they were waiting for.

Frank pushed matters as rapidly as possible.

But he was finally forced to declare:

"It will be midnight certainly before we shall be able to leave this vicinity. Until then I must depend upon you all to keep the foe at bay!"

"Be jabbers, we'll thry it!" cried Barney.

"Golly! we jes' do our bes'," declared Pomp. "I done flnk we kin lick de whole tribe ob dem!"

"Don't be so sure!" adjured Frank. "I tell you they are a bad lot. An Indian is like a shadow after dark!"

"I agree with you there, Frank!" declared Prof. Malabar, "but is there not some sure means of defense?"

An idea came to Frank.

"There is!" he cried.

Instantly he went down into the cabin. When he came up he had a long roll of wire.

"I shall resort to the power of the dynamo!" he said; "this wire must be placed in circles about the air-ship and connected with the dynamo and heavily charged. I can knock out an army with such a powerful weapon."

"Hurrah!" cried Malabar at once enthused with the idea. "You are right."

"Be jabbers, that'll kape thim away!" agreed Barney.

But a problem presented itself.

How was the wire circuit to be made? The Indians would at once pick off anybody exposed in such a manner.

But this did not puzzle Frank for but a few moments.

"I have a means of safe operation," he said.

Down into the cabin he went again. This time when he came up he had a long box fastened with a padlock.

He quickly unlocked this and opened the box. Then all saw what looked like a suit of very fine meshes of steel.

"Chain armor!" cried Malabar, in astonishment.

"You are right," replied Frank. "And impervious to any rifle bullet. Any one is safe with it on."

"If that is so," cried the professor, "allow me to accomplish the task of laying the wire circuits. I will esteem it a favor."

"It shall be so," replied Frank, "and Barney and Pomp will protect you also with their rifles."

The plan was acceptable to all. No time was lost in its consummation. Frank went below and to work.

While Prof. Malabar took the wire and proceeded to lay a number of circles around the air-ship, at a distance of twenty or thirty yards from the ship.

Of course this operation was at once seen by the savages, who manifested their disapproval very forcibly.

They crept up through the buffalo wallow, and opened fire upon the professor.

Bullet after bullet struck the steel meshes. But in every case their impact was resisted.

The professor kept about his work unconcernedly. Barney and Pomp at intervals sent bullets in the direction of the buffalo wallow.

Darkness was now increasing every moment. Soon Prof. Malabar had finished his job.

He returned to the air-ship, and a connection was made with the powerful dynamo. These were run to their full capacity.

The deadly circuit was established. It was now impossible for the savages to safely approach from any direction.

Yet that such was their purpose, under cover of darkness, was certain. At times skulking forms could be plainly seen at different points, gradually working nearer the air-ship.

Barney and Pomp amused themselves by trying fancy shots at them. Ever and anon a bullet would tell.

"Begorra an' I believe there'll be music afore mornin'," declared Barney, with a knowing shake of the head. "If ever ther omadhauns run agin them electric wires, may the Lord have marcy on thim!"

Frank was yet busily at work below decks. Pomp went below after a time to prepare the evening meal.

It was a moonless night, and the darkness was most intense.

Prof. Malabar wanted to make use of the search-light, but Frank said:

"No, I would not. Wait awhile. We shall be all safe anyway with the electric circuit. We can use the light better after the alarm is sprung."

"I believe you are right," agreed the professor after some reflection.

Frank knew that the savages would not attempt their second attack until a late hour. For the nonce there was nothing to fear.

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE GOLDEN GATE.

So all ate their evening meal with perhaps some little excitement, but nevertheless a sense of security.

After it was over, Frank again repaired to the engine-room. He was having good success with his work.

"About midnight," he declared, "it will all be finished. If they do not attack us before then we shall be able to get up and leave them."

This was joyful news and all felt encouraged.

But the Apaches had no idea of waiting until after midnight before making their attack.

Indeed, it was barely ten o'clock when they made their second onslaught.

All this while Barney and the professor had been on deck intently watching the moving prairie grass beyond the circle of electric wires.

They knew that in this the savages were hiding. Yet they did not risk a shot, preferring to wait.

Pomp was in the engine room assisting Frank. Suddenly there was a terror inspiring sound from the darkness of the night.

It was as if all pandemonium had been let loose.

The air became hideous with the most fiendish of yells and savage cries. Frank lost no time.

He dropped his tools.

"Come, Pomp!" he said, tersely.

He paused just long enough to turn on the full current from the dynamo. Then he sprang up on deck.

Frank's first move was to go to the searchlight.

It was but an instant's work to turn it on full force. Then he directed it out upon the prairie.

The scene witnessed was one never forgotten by the aerial travelers.

The Apaches had reached the heavily charged wires. Not a dozen succeeded in crossing without coming in direct contact.

These were shot down.

Those who came in contact with the wires were badly treated. They were either instantly killed by the shock or hurled back senseless.

In a very few seconds the entire horde were as severely repulsed as though in the face of an army. The scene was one which baffles description.

"Bejabbers, that settles their case!" cried Barney, excitedly. "Wud yez luk at thim run!"

This was true. The survivors of the deadly repulse were in ignominious flight. They did not return to the attack.

Thus ended the experiences of the aerial voyagers with the Apaches. Before daybreak the broken cog was repaired, the anchors were pulled in, and the Needle once more sprang into the air.

Once more the trip around the world was in progress. Frank knew the importance of making up for lost time, so he crowded on all speed.

The air-ship literally flew through the atmosphere. Straight westward the course was held.

The next morning Frank consulted the speed register and took his bearings.

"We are but five hundred miles from San Francisco," he said.

"We shall be there to-night."

His words proved true. It was just dusk when the air-ship, after descending the slopes of the Sierras, hung over the Golden Gate city.

The whole city seemed ablaze with light, and as the air-ship settled down, cannon were heard booming.

"Upon my word, they have prepared a reception for us!" cried Prof. Malabar. "Do you realize that, Frank?"

"It looks like it," said Frank, in a matter of fact way.

It had been arranged that the Needle should find safe quarters at the estate of a friend of Frank's on Nob Hill, named Royal Gates.

In the grounds the San Francisco millionaire had caused a platform to be built, upon which the air-ship could rest.

The people had long been on the watch for the air-ship. Now when she was seen far off in the sky their enthusiasm knew no bounds.

Sky rockets rose in the air, cannon were booming, and there was every appearance of a grand fete. Frank realized this, and was somewhat embarrassed.

"I am sorry for all this," he said. "I would much rather have made a quiet entrance. I dislike anything of this sort for its very publicity."

"I don't see but that you have got to take your medicine," laughed Prof. Malabar.

"It looks like it certainly."

By the time the Needle was directly over the city darkness had settled down most profound. Frank opened the slide of the searchlight.

This sent a pathway of radiant light down into the city. The spectacle was one beyond description.

Down settled the air-ship over Nob Hill.

Frank knew the residence of his friend quite well. When a few hundred feet above the housetops the air-ship glided over the grounds of the Gates estate.

A cordon of police surrounded the place.

Upon the platform where the Needle was to descend was Royal Gates himself, with the mayor and the leading men of the town.

A few moments later and the Needle had landed after the consummating of some twenty-five hundred miles of the journey.

Frank sprang down from the decks and gripped the hands of his friend. He was then presented to the representatives of the city.

In a very few moments the young inventor was upon a friendly footing with all present.

"How long a stay will you make with us, Frank?" asked Gates.

"Only until to-morrow noon."

"Why, I thought it was to be a whole day and perhaps longer."

"Yes, but we were delayed on our way hither. I fear I shall not succeed in my purpose if I tarry."

"Is there any possibility of failure?"

"I don't know," said Frank, with a grimace. "I ought not to have stopped here. However, I shall hope to make up for the loss in crossing the Pacific to Pekin."

"You will stop there?"

"Yes."

Further conversation ensued and then Frank and the professor were invited up to the house to a spread.

It was midnight before they retired. But there were few slept in San Francisco that night.

All were anxious to watch the departure of the air-ship, and many feared that it might take flight in the night. Hence they were bound to be on hand.

But morning found the Needle at its anchorage. Then Royal Gates threw open his grounds, and thousands of people in a line passed through so as to get a near view of the air-ship.

By noontime the crowd on Nob Hill was beyond calculation. Frank did not delay the hour set for departure.

But exactly at the hour he shook hands with Gates and waved an adieu to the people.

Then he sprang aboard the air racer.

"Let her rise, Barney," he said.

The Celt pressed the rotascope valve. Up shot the air-ship. In a few seconds she was half a mile up in the sky.

To the westward spread the smooth and glittering expanse of the golden Pacific.

Out over the great ocean the air-ship moved, and soon land began to fade from view.

All that day the sky was clear and cloudless. The air was balmy and fresh, and the voyagers keenly enjoyed the aerial sail.

The Needle proved herself worthy of her name and purpose.

She was fearful fast, and left distance behind her like the flight of an arrow.

When well out of sight of land Frank allowed the air-ship to descend to within five hundred feet of the water.

There was now no danger of colliding with any mountain peak or other obstruction.

Also Prof. Malabar was very desirous of studying the sea.

Many sailing vessels and steamers were seen, flying the flags of various nations.

In many cases they fired a salute to the air-ship, and it was evident that the Needle was a mighty source of wonder to them.

"No doubt it seems very odd to many of those sea captains," said Malabar. "To see a ship sailing in air is no ordinary sight."

"That is true," agreed Frank. "If we were not racing against time we would speak some of them."

The Needle kept up her lightning-like flight all that day and night.

At a late hour the next morning Frank made his computations.

"We have accomplished some nine hundred miles," he declared.

"At this rate we shall reach Pekin full two days ahead of time."

All received this statement with pleasure. Particularly pleased were Barney and Pomp.

"Be jabbers if Misther Frank can't get around the world in thirty days thin nobody kin!" averred Barney.

"Dat am right, sah!" agreed Pomp.

The darky went below chuckling over a certain good joke which he had been working upon the Celt.

Pomp had it in for Barney, and was resolved to square some old accounts. His method of doing so was as unique as it was original. Besides being cook Pomp was also laundress.

He did the washing for all on board, Barney's included. This giving him the desired opportunity.

Selecting one suit of Barney's underclothing and a handkerchief, Pomp put them to soak in a separate tub in which he infused an enormous quantity of red pepper and a few other delightful ingredients.

The task of ironing the clothes was not an easy one after this preparation, but Pomp endured it with the prospect before him of getting square with the Celt.

"Ki yi!" he chuckled. "I jes' fix dat swell headed Mick dis time fo' suah. He nebber try no mo' ob his sassy tricks on Pomp, I don't believe."

The clothes were ironed and hung up to dry. To all outward appearances there was nothing the matter with them.

But the next morning Pomp went into Barney's state room as usual and apportioned him his change of clothing.

"I want yo' dirty clothes right now to put in de wash," he declared.

"Jes' yo' change an' put on dese."

"Begorra, it's willin' I am to do that!" declared Barney.

With which he changed his underclothing entire, and thrust the newly laundried handkerchief into his pocket.

There was no immediate effect. That came later.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COAST OF JAPAN.

BARNEY went about his duties as usual. After awhile he became arduously employed and began to perspire.

Naturally he resorted to his handkerchief, wiping the perspiration from his brow. Very speedily his eyes began to smart most unmercifully.

Then he began to sneeze.

It was as if a regular old-fashioned influenza had him foul. The more he sneezed the more he flourished the handkerchief, and, of course, the more he had to sneeze.

"Begorra, phwat's eating me, I'd loike to know," cried the Celt, finally. "Shure, I'm burnin' up!"

Pomp behind the galley door was convulsed with laughter.

His game was working far beyond his most sanguine expectations. "Fo' de Lor' sakes!" he muttered, "dat I'ishman hab got his fill dis time."

The perspiration of Barney's body had now begun to draw the fiery qualities from the flannel of his under-shirt. It really seemed to him as if he was being consumed with fire.

And never once did a correct suspicion of the true state of affairs cross his mind. He did not dream of the truth.

Scratch, scratch, scratch! Pull and haul, rub and pound!

"Murther an' blazes!" howled the Celt after a while. "Shure, phwat's hould av me!"

Frank chanced at this moment to come on deck.

He saw the antics of the Celt, and in surprise asked:

"What's the matter with you, Barney?"

"Shure, sor, I don't know!" cried the afflicted Celt. "It's the devil has me, sor! I'm that burnin' an' itching loike I can't breathe. An', sor, I've sich a cowlid in me head that me nose and eyes are afther coming out av me face!"

With which Barney again resorted to the handkerchief which resulted in a worse attack of sneezing.

Pomp, the black rascal, was yet hiding behind the galley door and literally convulsed with laughter.

It was more fun and revenge than he had enjoyed before in all his life.

Frank who of course never guessed the truth, was astounded at Barney's plight.

"What in the world ails you, Barney?" he cried. "I should think that you had influenza, or something worse. Are you sick?"

"Shure sor, I dunno," replied the Celt, between his tears. "Divil a bit do I know phwat ails me, only I'm burnin' up."

Professor Malabar now came to the rescue.

"Dear me," he exclaimed sympathetically, "the poor fellow has genuine fever and ague. We must give him some quinine at once." So the scientist drew out a box of pills and compelled Barney to swallow several.

"Go right to bed, my good man," he said. "You will be better soon."

Frank made no objections for he sincerely believed that Barney was sick. Malabar led the afflicted Celt below and tumbled him into his bunk!

But Barney yet clung to the fatal handkerchief, nor did he remove his underclothing.

Of course his agony did not cease and he rolled and tossed like a man in the throes of fever.

And now Pomp began to relent. The darky saw that the matter was beginning to assume a serious aspect.

And he found himself in a dilemma. How was he to relieve his friend now that the joke had gone far enough?

Of course there was no reason why Barney should suspect the true cause of his sufferings. They might continue indefinitely and perhaps with serious results.

All these thoughts flashed through the darky's disturbed mind.

He was now quite in a fever himself.

"Fo' de lan' sakes!" he muttered, "how am I gwine fo' to git him out ob dat shirt?"

It would never do to tell Barney the truth. Nor would it do to bluntly tell him to remove the shirt, for, of course his suspicions would be at once aroused.

At the very last moment an idea occurred to Pomp. He hastened to execute it.

With a serious and sympathetic face he went into Barney's state-room.

"Am yo' berry sick, I'ish?" he asked, soothingly. "I done tell yo' I am berry sorry fo' yo'!"

"Begorra I'd be all roight if iver I cud leave off sneezing!" sputtered Barney.

"Mebbe yo' am cotched a bad cold!" ventured Pomp.

"Be me sowl, I think I have that!"

"I know somefing berry good fo' dat!"

"Yez do!"

"Shuah, sah!"

"Well, begorra, then bring it on an' don't be afther lettin' av me die!"

"I bring some cold water and some medicine in a bottle I hab fo' to rub on yo' an' yo' get well direckly!"

Had Barney been less under the influence of the agony he was in he must have reflected upon the absurdity of such treatment for a cold.

But he thought only of possible relief, no matter how it might be procured, and therefore cried:

"Shure go an' make me well if yez kin!"

"I kin jes' do dat, I'ish!"

Pomp vanished and went post haste to the galley.

When he returned he had a big sponge, a pail of cold water and a bottle of simple colored water.

Barney paused in his sneezing to observe what his colleague was doing for his relief.

"Yo' see I jes' put dis ere medicine in de water," cried Pomp, "den yo' pull off yo' shirt an' I gib yc' a sponge bath."

The cold water looked tempting, and Barney was not at all averse to the treatment.

Off came the shirt, and Pomp managed to get hold of the handkerchief. Also he contrived to accidentally drop them in the pail.

Of course, Barney was instantly relieved. But before he could really grasp the cause of this relief, Pomp began work with the sponge.

Barney's body was literally a brick-red from the irritation of the pepper in the shirt.

But the cooling water had an excellent effect upon it, and in a few moments the Celt was almost as good as well again.

His joy was intense.

"Begorra, naygur, yez have saved me loife!" he cried, ecstatically. "I'll niver fergit yez!"

This was too much for Pomp.

The situation had suddenly again assumed a humorous aspect and he burst into a roar of laughter.

Barney stood for a moment astounded. Then a dark suspicion began to straggle across his mind.

At the same moment his eye rested upon the shirt which had fallen into the pail of water.

Already the water was soaking some of the pepper out of the cloth. Mystified Barney reached down and picked up the wet shirt. It required but an instant's examination for him to see the whole game.

Pomp seeing that the trick was betrayed had started for the door.

But Barney, maddened by the realization of the trick played upon him, grabbed the bucket of water.

"I'll tache ye manners, ye black scoundrel!" he yelled. "Begorra, yez will play roots on me, eh? Whurroo! Take that for yez impudence!"

Swish—swash!

Pomp dodged, but he was not quite quick enough. The dirty water came down upon him in a literal deluge.

He was for a moment half strangled. There was enough pepper from the soaking shirt to make it interesting for nose and eyes.

"There's a dose of yez own medicine, bejabers!" cried Barney. "I'll aven it up wid yez yit, me hearty!"

Pomp escaped to the galley. Barney crawled into some new clothing which had not been doctored beforehand and was himself once more.

He appeared on deck as chipper as ever save for the redness of eyes and nose, and Frank and Malabar regarded him with keen surprise.

"Why, we thought you were very sick, sir!" cried Frank. "What does this mean?"

"Shure, sor, it was all a foine thrick, sor!"

"A trick?"

"Yis, sor!" scowled Barney.

"Why, what do you mean?"

"It's the naygur, sor. Shure, he washed me shirt in cayenne pepper. Shure, he'll not do it agin, I'm thiokin'."

And Barney whisked indignantly into the pilot-house.

Frank and the professor exchanged glances, and then both lapsed into a wild peal of laughter.

"Well, of all things!" exclaimed Malabar, "they must like to play pranks on each other."

"They are up to such things all the time," said Frank. "Were they less faithful in their duties, I might find fault. But as it is, I cannot."

"Oh, certainly not, Barney and Pomp are very faithful."

But Barney had sworn a great round oath of revenge upon his sooty persecutor, and he was in earnest.

The Needle was doing noble work. Day in and out she kept up that tireless flight over the seemingly endless sea.

Archipelagoes were passed over, comprising hundreds of lovely tropical isles, and occasionally a stray ship was met.

But one day, at sunrise, Frank came on deck with his distance glass.

"We should see the Japanese coast in less than an hour!" he said.

"We have gained two days in our journey across the Pacific."

This welcome announcement drew cheers from the others. All crowded to the rail and strained their gaze.

"We will first cross Japan!" asked Prof. Malabar.

"Yes!" replied Frank, "the island of Japan and then the Japanese Sea. Next the peninsula of Corea, and an arm of the Yellow Sea. Then Pekin."

"The famous capital of China!" declared the professor. "I shall be more than glad to view it!"

Suddenly Barney gave a great shout.

"Be jabers, there she is!" he cried.

This was true. Far down on the horizon was the long line which indicated land.

Every moment now it became more tangible to the view. Also, ships with lateen sails, junks and sampans, were seen peopling the waters below.

At last they had crossed the Great Pacific, and the wonderful lands of China and Ind were before them.

CHAPTER IX.

AT PEKIN.

THIS was certainly a realization of no light sort. The quickness and the manner of the trip were subjects for more than ordinary reflection.

The voyagers gazed upon the scene spread before their gaze with varied sensations.

Swiftly the Needle bore them toward the land.

They were not so high up but that they could easily see the native crews upon the ships below.

The Japanese sailors seemed struck with fear and wonderment and consternation marked their actions.

It was evident that the air-ship was to them a supernatural exhibition, and their superstitious fears were consequently rampant.

Some of their actions caused a great deal of amusement to those aboard the Needle.

But now the land began to loom up.

As is well known to the reader doubtless, Japan is a very populous country.

The shore was lined with villages and the little harbors with fishing boats. But the Needle quickly passed over these.

The first pagoda was seen not half a mile from the sea.

It was a magnificent structure, being composed largely of beautiful porcelain.

On into the interior sailed the air-ship.

An interesting panorama was now unfolded.

No country or people in the world are superior to the Japanese in the arts of husbandry or agriculture.

There were enormous tea and opium plantations on every hand.

In every quarter the apparition of the air-ship coming so suddenly upon them from the sky seemed to spread consternation among the people.

But everywhere the people were seen to be busy.

"There are probably fewer laggards in Japan than any other part of the world," declared Prof. Malabar. "There is a penal sentence for idleness."

"A very proper thing," declared Frank. "But what would they say to such a thing in America?"

"I am afraid American ideas of liberty would not tolerate such a thing."

"I fear not."

It must be remembered that the island of Nippon or Japan is not very broad even in its wildest part, so in a very short time the air-ship came to the waters of the Japan Sea.

It required some hours to cross this but it was not yet evening, when the Chinese coast broke into view and a short distance inland the City of Pekin burst into view.

It was an incomparable scene which now rewarded the gaze of the aerial travelers.

Pekin with its wonderful pagodas, its mammoth temples, its bazaars and shops, canals and streets was a scene so totally different from anything to be seen in their native land that all on board the Needle gazed in wonderment.

"It looks like a fabled city," cried Prof. Malabar. "Is the spectacle not beautiful?"

There was no denying this.

A peculiar bluish haze hung in the atmosphere and about the porcelain towers and galleries which was indescribable.

The inhabitants swarming the streets below looked like swarms of ants. The scene was one never forgotten.

"See!" cried Malabar, "they have caught sight of us!"

This was true.

One quarter of the city at least seemed to be thrown into a state of the greatest excitement. People could be seen crowding housetops and towers and the roar of cannon was heard.

"They are ready for us."

"You are right," agreed Frank, with a long face, "but I wish I knew what kind of a reception they intend to give us."

"But the American Consul is to meet and provide for us—"

"True; but you must remember that this is the land of the heathen, and for ways 'that are dark' they are peculiar, to say the least."

"But—why should they do us harm?"

"No good reason. Unless it might be that they should get a fancy that we had come to storm and capture the city."

"How absurd!"

"Yet, not too absurd for a Chinese. We will first reconnoiter."

Frank let the Needle descend slowly, looking everywhere for the American flag.

It had been arranged with the consul that this should be displayed upon some housetop where the air-ship should descend. There the consul would meet them and offer them the protection of the American flag.

So Frank let the air-ship drift over the Chinese metropolis, looking all the while for the flag.

Suddenly Malabar cried:

"There it is!"

Sure enough, upon the top of a high building there waved the American flag. The air-ship descended and hung some hundred feet above the housetop.

Upon the roof Frank saw a number of men, Americans and Englishmen. One of them, whom he recognized as Ward, the consul, waved his arms.

"All right!" cried Malabar, joyfully. "It's all safe, Frank. Let the air-ship go down."

Down settled the Needle. The next moment she rested upon the roof.

Frank Reade, Jr., sprang down from the deck to meet Ward.

"Hurrah!" cried the American consul. "You have arrived ahead of time, although we have been on the lookout for you."

"I mean to beat my time of thirty days around the world," declared Frank—"of course, barring accidents."

"I hope you will."

Then followed a general introduction. The consul's companions were foreign residents of the city, and all were overjoyed to meet the aerial party.

Quite a pleasant conversation was indulged in.

Then Frank took them over the air-ship, explaining its wonderful mechanism to them.

After this they came down once more upon the roof; but at this moment Frank first became conscious of a tremendous uproar from the street below.

"Mercy! what is that?" he cried.

"It is just as I feared," cried Ward, in distress; "these ignorant classes in China cannot be controlled. They are the curse of the country. Evidently they are angry at the invasion of the air-ship."

"Then it will not be safe for us to remain here," said Frank.

"If the Emperor's guard arrives, as he promised to send it, I think it will."

"But if not—"

Ward looked bitterly disappointed.

"I must tell the truth!" he said. "I fear you cannot stop in Pekin!"

Prof. Malabar was bitterly disappointed.

"That is too bad!" he cried, almost with petulance, "there is so much that I wish to do!"

"If you had come by steamer or in any other way!" declared Ward, "I think you would have been safe. But the ignorant classes are superstitious."

"I am very sorry!" said Frank.

He walked to the edge of the roof and looked down.

The scene below was one once seen never to be forgotten. The narrow street was choked with thousands of wildly excited heathens.

They were endeavoring to break a way into the building. Frank saw that they would soon succeed in doing it.

If they should, the position of the air-ship would be a dangerous one, indeed.

So he turned and said:

"I fear it will not be safe for us to stop in Pekin, Mr. Ward!"

"You can guess that I would be more than pleased to have you!" said the consul, earnestly, "but for your safety and ours, I think you had better go!"

"Then I will."

"Where will be your next stopping place?"

"Constantinople."

"Good! I hope you will beat your record home. Accept my congratulations. Remember me to all inquiring ones in America."

"I will do so."

Frank sprang aboard the air-ship. The anchors were quickly pulled in. Not a moment too soon.

There was a terrific crash below and the building shook. The Chinese had burst their way into it.

Frank opened the switch and the rotascopes began to revolve.

Up shot the air-ship.

The maddened yells of the excited populace died out. The Needle swept quickly across Pekin and left the Chinese capital far behind. Not until it had faded from sight did any draw a breath of relief.

Then Prof. Malabar said:

"If we had attempted to face those fiends, every one of us would have paid for it with his life."

"I believe you are right," declared Frank. "We are well out of it."

"Now for Constantinople!"

Darkness quickly shut down. When morning came, the Needle was out on the verge of the Desert of Gobi.

Inner Mongolia was touched, and as the air-ship was sailing low, Frank called attention to a mighty wall, like the curtain wall of a mediæval castle extending into the distance.

"The great wall of China!" he declared. "That was built in the days of Confucius."

Days passed. The Needle kept up her lightning flight over Asia. One province after another was crossed.

One day the Celestial Mountains were crossed, and the air-ship came into Bokhara. Next came Turkoumania, then the waters of the Caspian Sea burst into view.

A cheer burst from the lips of the travelers as they gazed upon it. It was an important landmark in their journey.

For upon crossing it, they would have left Asia behind and would be in Europe.

This seemed almost like reaching home. Shortly after crossing the Caspian Sea Frank called attention to a mighty mountain to the southward.

"Mt. Ararat!" he declared. "Where the ark was supposed to have landed."

All viewed this historic mountain with interest. They were in Turkey, the land of the sultan.

Along the shores of the Black Sea the air-ship rapidly sailed.

At length one morning early the Bosphorus was sighted and the wonderful city of Constantinople lay revealed before them like a beautiful dream.

Truly our adventurers thought they had never seen so beautiful a city as this. The domes and spires and minarets gleamed like alabaster in the golden sunlight.

Here as in Pekin Frank had arranged with the American Consul for a landing upon some house top.

This was to be designated by an American flag. The air-ship hung over the city an hour before the flag was seen. Then it was displayed.

CHAPTER X.

FLOYD'S CLEVER GAME.

UNLIKE Pekin, the residents of Constantinople had been forewarned of the coming of the air-ship.

Being a civilized people, they had, of course, experienced no superstitious fears. On the contrary, the city was agog with interest to see the wonderful invention.

So the appearance of the air-ship over the city had created a positive furor. The people gathered in multitudes.

But no one thought of doing the aerial travelers harm. At least, no one of the natives.

Only one was there, and he was an American, who watched the air-ship with dark thoughts in his bosom.

This was Gustavus Floyd, the New York sport and gambler.

He had come all the way to Constantinople to, if possible, delay the air-ship, and thereby win his wager that she would not make the journey around the earth in thirty days.

Floyd's eyes gleamed with an evil light as he regarded the graceful proportions of the air-ship so far up there in the blue ether.

"She is going to remain here a day!" he muttered. "Well and good. If I can make it a week, or even forever, then I may gain my money."

The villain had not been idle since coming to Constantinople.

He was an adroit schemer, and he already had the wires laid for a scheme by which he hoped to gain his ends.

And those on board the air-ship had no suspicion of anything of this sort as they hovered over the city.

Presently Frank saw the sign of the American flag.

At once the air-ship descended, and rested upon a house top.

The consul, whom we will call Mr. Wagner, met Frank cordially. With him were a number of Americans, who had been sojourning in the Turkish capital.

Pleasant remarks were exchanged, and then Mr. Wagner said:

"You are to dine at the consulate. The Sultan's emissaries will be there to welcome you to Constantinople."

"We are honored!" said Frank, "but will the Needle be all safe here?"

"You will not leave it alone?"

"No, I will leave Pomp in charge!"

"Very good! I will guarantee that it will be safe then!"

Frank did not demur further. He and Prof. Malabar and Barney dressed themselves in their best and accompanied Wagner to the consulate.

Here a charming spread had been arranged in the Turkish fashion. A little later the emissaries came in, pompous, bejeweled fellows who wore keen scimeters. They brought a message from the sultan.

Wagner read it, and something like a light of consternation shone in his eyes. He called Frank aside.

"Something is wrong!" he said.

"What do you mean?" asked Frank.

"The sultan has changed his mind!"

"How?"

"He had expressed a desire to see you immediately upon your arrival. He now sends a request that you remain until Saturday when he will give you audience."

Frank snapped his fingers.

"Pshaw!" he exclaimed. "What do I care for that. I shall go on my way, at once. If I was to wait until Saturday I should be a day behind time."

The consul's brow was clouded.

"Something is wrong!" he declared, forcibly. "I don't understand it. I tell you these Turkish people are queer!"

"Yes, but I cannot forego my promise, not even for the Sultan!" replied Frank. "I can only say that I am sorry."

"But it will not do to send him that message."

"Why?"

"He is apt to order you under arrest and hold you a week or more!"

"Will he dare? I am an American citizen."

"Oh, there will be a good excuse. Remember you are on foreign soil. Their laws are not ours. Be politic."

"I thank you!" replied Frank. "I will take your advice. I will leave Constantinople at midnight."

"Good!"

So Frank welcomed the emissaries politely and sent a flattering reply to His Majesty, to the effect that if Fate permitted he would accept the honor of an interview at the appointed time.

"But Fate will never permit it," Frank muttered to himself.

The formalities of the dinner over Frank was resolved at once to return to the air-ship.

He knew that Sultans are of a very capricious nature, and that at

any moment an embargo might be placed upon the air-ship, preventing its sailing within a reasonable time.

Turkish ideas are to execute the laws and then argue the justice of them afterwards.

The emissaries had departed and all felt free to talk.

"It is very strange!" declared Wagner. "By the way, do you know a man from New York named Floyd?"

"Gustavus Floyd!" exclaimed Frank. "Why, yes. He is in prison now for trying to destroy the Needle."

"No, you are wrong."

"What?"

"He is not in prison."

"Not in prison?"

"No."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that he is here at this moment in Constantinople."

Frank was dumfounded, as were Malabar and Barney. They could hardly believe their senses.

"He came here and asked for passports," declared Wagner. "He did not state his business. I considered him a suspicious character."

"And so he is."

"Now I have a theory."

"What?"

"The Sultan's queer conduct may be due to some game of his. For several days past he has been closeted with one of the Viziers."

Like a thunderclap all came to Frank.

"Of course!" he cried. "That is it. He is anxious that the air-ship shall not reach New York in thirty days. He has bet fifty thousand dollars that she will not."

"That then explains all."

For some moments silence reigned.

Then Consul Wagner said:

"Well, Mr. Reade, what shall we do about it?"

"What would you advise?" asked Frank. "I don't see what right the Sultan has to detain me."

"Might makes right in any of these heathenish countries," replied Wagner. "I would advise you, if it is imperatively necessary to make the trip in thirty days, to at once leave Constantinople."

"Well," said Prof. Malabar, with a deprecatory shrug of the shoulders, "we seem to be fated. I wonder if they will have any excuse for assaulting us when we get to New York?"

"In my opinion it is a question wholly of personal safety," said the consul. "I could not answer for your lives if you fall into the sultan's power. He would kill you and then settle with your country afterwards."

"One question," said Frank.

"Well?"

"What influence or power could Floyd possibly employ to prejudice the sultan against us?"

"Do you know what I think he has done?"

"Well?"

"He has consulted with the Grand Vizier and represented himself as an emissary from the United States sent secretly to bid the sultan beware of the air ship, as it probably had come to Constantinople for the purpose of blowing him up with dynamite or something of the sort."

"How absurd!"

"In one sense—yes. Put yourself in the sultan's place."

"You are right. Floyd is a consummate scoundrel. If he ever shows his head in the United States again I'll prosecute him to the fullest extent of the law."

"That will be your privilege in America. But you cannot claim that on Turkish soil."

"But you, as American Minister, should have some influence with the sultan?"

"Not the least. You do not know him. He is a veritable demagogue. It would be impossible to argue with him."

"You believe it?"

"I know it."

"Then it looks to me as if we were in great danger!"

"Go back to the air-ship as quickly as you can and leave Turkey."

"Bejabers, so say I!" cried Barney.

"It shall be done!" said Frank, resolutely. "Eh, Malabar, what say you?"

"I had hoped to have spent some time longer in this historic city," replied the professor, "but I believe that our personal safety demands that we leave now."

"Then let us lose no time."

All shook hands with the Consul. Wagner put on his hat.

"I will accompany you to the air-ship," he said. "Perhaps my appearance with you may be a measure of protection."

"You are very kind," said Frank.

With this all passed out of the consulate. Once upon the street they started for the locality of the air-ship.

But at the very next corner they encountered a Turkish guard. All carried gleaming scimiters.

"The sultan's guard!" cried Wagner. "Keep closer by me. I shall protect you as far as I can."

Our adventurers saw at a glance that the guard was after them. At sight of them the Turkish soldiers at once closed in about them.

"Hold," cried Wagner angrily. "I am Consul of the United States. These men are under my protection."

"They are prisoners of the sultan," declared the captain of the Janizaries in the Turkish tongue. "Surrender, you dogs!"

In vain Wagner tried to argue. The wretches would not listen.

They closed in and instantly laid hands upon Frank and Malabar. But Barney let out an Irish yell.

"Whurroo! Yez'll niver catch Barney O'Shea! Shure, Misther Frank, howld on fer yer loife, for Pomp an' mesilf will rescue yez or die!"

Down the street went the Celt like a shot. Pistols were fired at him and a number of the Turkish soldiers went in pursuit.

But it was useless. They did not overtake him.

Barney made straight for the air-ship. Even as he gained the house-top where it was, he heard the troops after him below.

Instantly he sprang aboard and yelled to Pomp:

"Up wid the ship, naygur! Shure it'll be the devil's own fer us if we don't! The omadhauns are roight ather us!"

Pomp was paralyzed with surprise.

"Massy sakes!" he cried. "Where am Marse Frank an' de purfes-sor? Will yo' done tell me dat, chile?"

CHAPTER XI.

A DARING ESCAPE.

"SHURE, it's prisoners they are," replied Barney, excitedly.

"Prisoners!"

"Yes. Be lively, fer I haven't any toime to talk wid yez now."

With which Barney sprang into the pilot house and turned the rotascope switch. Up shot the air-ship.

They were not a moment too soon. Just then the Turkish soldiers gained the housetop; but they were too late. The birds had flown.

"Wud yez luk at them!" cried Barney. "Shure they're after us."

"But I don' fink dey am ebber gwine fo' to get us!" declared Pomp. "We'se too soon fo' dem."

"Begorra, but phwat will we do fer Mr. Misther Frank and the professor?" wailed Barney. "Bad cees to the haythens anyway!"

"I done fink we must saba dem in some way," declared Pomp.

"Mebbe yez kin tell how."

"Yes, sah, I fink I can."

"Shure an' how?"

"Jes' fin' out where dey am in de prison an' I fink we am fools if kain't git dem out ob it."

"Mebbe we kin," agreed Barney. "Shure we'll be ather thyrin'!"

Let us now return to Frank and Malabar who were in the hands of the janizaries. Their position was a thrilling one.

In vain Wagner tried to intercede. He argued and threatened, but the stupid guardsmen knew only their orders and knew that to disobey them meant the lopping off of their heads.

"It's no use," said Wagner finally. "You'll have to go to prison. But I'll go to the Sultan at once myself."

"All right," replied Frank cheerily. "They can't any more than cut our heads off."

"They had better not do that," exclaimed Wagner.

So Frank and the professor were dragged off to the Turkish prison. They were thrust into a dark cell with only one window. This looked out over the Turkish city.

And as they looked out of this window Frank gave a little cry of joy.

"Look!" he shouted, "there is the air-ship. It is safe!"

"Heaven be praised!" cried Malabar, "that is so."

There, over the city, far up in the air the Needle was seen to be still hovering. The young inventor knew that Barney and Pomp, faithful fellows, would leave no stone unturned to effect his rescue.

How he wished he could attract their attention. But this seemed impossible. Frank tried to wave his handkerchief out of the window.

But if it was seen the aerial voyagers did not pay any attention to it. Still the Needle hung over the city. Hours passed, and the suspense endured by the prisoners was something fearful to bear.

"I should think our consul would, at least, endeavor to do something for us," complained Malabar. "We are unjustly imprisoned. Why should we not have the protection of our government?"

"It is all the work of that rascally Floyd!" Frank declared, positively. "You may rest assured of that."

"Why should the Sultan lend ear to him. Confound the scoundrel! He will see us beheaded simply to win his foolish wager. He ought to be hung for it!"

"I share your sentiments," declared Frank, "but what are we going to do about it?"

"Mercy on us! Has an American citizen no protection in Turkey?"

"It amounts to about that," replied Frank. "However, we will hope for the best."

"Hope long deferred is as bad as the fate!" growled the professor. "Heigho! What is that?"

There was the clank of arms in the outer corridor. Both prisoners turned to see what it meant.

Before the grated door a file of guardsmen stood.

The leader began to read a lengthy document in a loud voice. Then one of the men in the rank stepped out and laid a heavy daub of red paint upon the grating with a brush.

Then the guard went on. Enough of the language was understood by Frank so that he could get a fair conception of what the declaration meant.

"We are condemned to death," he said, "that is what that scoundrel said, and that red paint means that we are marked for ex-

ecution. Unless we can make our escape at once it will be all up with us!"

The two prisoners looked at each other for a few moments with a species of dismay and horror.

"What can we do?"

"We must die!"

Frank took a stride toward the window. He examined the iron bars. They were set in the stone and seemed quite firm.

"In some way we must break these!" he cried. "We must escape!"

"But suppose we break them? What then?" asked Malabar.

Frank looked down into a deep courtyard, full forty feet below. Should they succeed in forcing a way through the window, how could they hope to make so great a descent?

This was a question not easily answered. For some while the prisoners brooded over it.

Darkness came at last.

Shortly after this, a guard came through the corridor and peered through the grating. He muttered something in a guttural tone, and then passed on.

"We are probably safe to work now," whispered Frank, "they will not come around again for some time."

But the words had barely left his lips when Malabar ejaculated:

"Hush!"

"What is the matter?"

"Listen!"

From the distance there came the murmur of voices and an uproar. Both prisoners went to the iron grating.

"Something is going on down below," exclaimed Frank. "What can it be?"

"I think I can guess."

"What?"

"There is probably an insurrection. Some of the prisoners are trying to escape and are fighting the guard."

Indeed this seemed likely as the truth. The uproar continued until it became extremely loud.

Then could plainly be heard yells and shouts and curses. The clash of arms and the report of fire-arms.

Frank was much excited.

"Now is our time!" he cried. "We must take advantage of this!"

Frank sprung to the window bars and began work upon them. To his joy he found one of them loose.

By dint of much strength and exertion the two men managed to remove this. They were about to tackle the next one when Malabar shrank back.

"Look out, Frank!"

"What's the matter?"

"Listen!"

There was a scraping sound along the wall of the prison. The next moment a dark body came swinging down over the window.

For a moment the two prisoners were too astonished to comprehend the true state of affairs.

Nor did they recover until a hoarse voice came through the prison bars.

"Misther Frank! fer the love of Heaven are yez there?"

"Barney!" cried Frank, wildly, "it is you?"

"Och hone, an' it's Misther Frank fer sure," cried the delighted Celt.

"How on earth did you get here?"

"Shure, sor, the air-ship is jist above. It's on a rope I am."

"Heaven be praised!" cried Malabar. "We are saved!"

"But there is no time to lose!" cried Frank. "They may see us from below at any moment."

"Begorra, that's so, sor!" cried Barney. "Have yez the window bars broken?"

"Crawl through, professor!" cried Frank. "I will follow very soon. There is no time to lose."

Malabar needed no urging. He very promptly obeyed.

Barney was on a rope ladder. The end of this was held by Frank, while the Celt and Malabar climbed up.

But they had not gone far when a loud yell came from the prison yard below. They had been seen by the guard.

Instantly pandemonium ensued in the prison. There was a worse uproar than ever.

Shots were fired at the escaping men on the rope ladder. Fifty feet above was the air-ship.

The bullets whistled about Barney and the professor. To be struck by one meant certain death.

Frank knew this well and also that something extraordinary must be done.

"Hurry up, Barney," he shouted. "Get aboard and then don't wait for me, but send the air ship up. I'll hang to the ladder; it's our only chance."

Barney grasped the idea.

"All roight, sor!" he shouted.

Up went the Celt until he reached the rail of the air ship. Malabar was close behind him.

Both went over the rail and were upon the deck of the Needle. Then Frank swung off the window ledge on the ladder.

"Up! up!" he shouted.

He was not a moment too soon. Guards burst into his cell. They rushed to the window with their carbines to shoot him.

But Pomp had already turned the electric switch.

Up shot the air-ship like a rocket. Frank was almost instantly a thousand feet in the air.

All the while he continued to climb up the ladder. A few moments later he went over the rail.

Once upon the deck of the air ship Frank gave a shout of triumph. All cheered heartily and they had good reason to do so.

They had won! To escape from the Sultan's prison right in the heart of Constantinople was certainly a feat to be proud of.

"What will Floyd think now?" cried Frank, triumphantly. "One villain is outwitted certainly!"

"You are right," said Malabar. "It is just upon him."

"Bad cess to the omadhann!" cried Barney. "Shure, I'm afther thinkin' we'd have had no trouble at all but for him."

"You are right, Barney," agreed Frank; "but there is nothing now to hinder our continuing our journey. We will yet succeed in our project of making the trip around the world in thirty days."

"There is but one more stop!" asked Malabar.

"At Terciera."

"Will we have trouble there?"

"I think not. I would not stop save to rest the electric engines. They will need some repairing without a doubt."

The spirits of all were gay. Barney danced a jig and Pomp stood on his head. Malabar lit his pipe and Frank indulged in a cigar. Despite the darkness the journey was resumed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SINKING SHIP.

THE lights of Constantinople began to fade out in the gloom. The starlit sky was gorgeous overhead, and the balmy air was exhilarating to the spirits of all on board the Needle.

There were no regrets experienced at leaving the Turkish capital. To the contrary, it was a matter of great relief.

"They can talk about their foreign countries all they've a mind to," cried Barney, "divil a bit do I want to do wid 'em. There's no place like Ameriky afther all!"

"Am yo' gwine to say dat, sah?" questioned Pomp.

"An' phwy not, sar?"

"Huh! Jes' de oder day yo' done fought dat Ireland was jes' de best place on the hull airth."

"I ain't goin' back on the ould sod," cried Barney, "but phwere do yez think ould Oireland is now? Shure, England has got the island av green, but Oireland itself has gone over to Ameriky."

With which patriotic utterance Barney went off about his work.

All that night the air-ship held a westerly course. Frank reckoned that the blue waters of the Mediterranean would be beneath them by daybreak.

"Then we will pass over the rock of Gibraltar," he cried, "thence to the Azores, and thence by air line to New York."

All retired awhile later, except Pomp, for sleep. The darky remained in the pilot-house.

When morning dawned all came on deck early. Pomp prepared a hearty breakfast.

The morning was a glorious one. The sun shone in a cloudless sky, and the air was soft and sweet.

Frank allowed the air-ship to descend until the waters of the Mediterranean could be seen.

They glimmered bright and beautiful. Not far distant was the shore, and various vessels of different nationalities were speeding through the waves.

That day was the most enjoyable of all since the start from New York.

In due time the air-ship hung over the rock of Gibraltar.

Here a genuine sensation was created, the whole garrison turning out en masse.

A band was heard playing "God Save the Queen," and also a salute of heavy guns was fired.

Frank answered by dipping the American flag, and a small volley was fired with the rifles.

Then straight out to sea stood the air-ship.

Straight for the Azores the course was set. Now full speed was put on.

But the exciting incidents of the voyage were by no means over.

Suddenly, as the air-ship was holding a steady course westward, a mass of dark clouds was seen to the south.

"A storm!" said Frank, anxiously.

"But we are going west," said Malabar. "Shall we not leave it behind us?"

"I fear not," replied Frank. "It looks to me as if it was switching around to head us off. However, we will endeavor to outrun it."

Their former experience with a hurricane led the voyagers to dread another.

So the Needle was given full headway and ran rapidly to the westward. The storm did not materialize that day.

It seemed to have passed into the southward and all felt encouraged to believe that the danger was over. But Frank shook his head.

"It has only just begun," he said. "We shall hit that storm, or the tail end of it before we make the Azores!"

This was by no means a pleasant prospect. However, that day passed without incident.

But the morning of the third day saw the Atlantic rough and choppy. A raw headwind blew out of the west.

It began to look as if Frank's predictions would come true.

However, with the principle in view that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," all was made ready aboard the air-ship.

But at this point there occurred a thrilling incident. Pomp who was in the bow espied a sail on the vast waste of tossing brine.

Something about the craft at once attracted the darky's attention. "Hi, Marse Frank!" he cried. "Will yo' jes' come here one mome-ment?"

"All right, Pomp," replied the young inventor. "What is the matter?"

"Suah, sah, I done fink dere am somefin' de mattah wif dat ship out dere. Wha' yo' fink?"

"Something the matter with it?"

"Yas, sah."

Frank procured his glass and carefully studied the craft.

Then he cried in alarm:

"Why, she is in distress!"

"In distress?" cried Malabar.

"Yes, I believe she is sinking!"

"Mercy! What a terrible fate for her crew! We must give help, Frank!"

"Certainly!"

Frank shouted to Barney, who was in the pilot-house, to bear down for the drifting ship.

Barney obeyed, and very quickly the air-ship had drawn so near that the true state of affairs could be seen.

The ship certainly was sinking. Her crew could be seen putting out in boats.

"Mercy!" cried Malabar. "I fear that the boat will not live in so rough a sea. And there are women and children. Oh, my God! that is awful!"

The latter exclamation was prompted by the sudden capsizing of the boat.

The entire load was dumped into the sea.

It was a heart-rending spectacle.

Men, women and children were instantly swallowed up in the ravenous waters.

The air-ship was going at full speed, but it could not hope to reach the spot in time.

The first boat's crew found a watery grave.

But another boat was now putting out.

There were fewer in her than in the other one.

"Perhaps she will live!" breathed Malabar. "Heaven pray that she will!"

But just at that moment the ship seemed to heel over and fill with water.

Almost instantly the ship went down.

The water completely covered her, and she went out of sight forever. The boat's crew were almost instantly thrown into the sea.

The awful vortex of water seemed to swallow them up.

"My soul, they are all drowned!" cried Prof. Malabar. "What a horrible fate."

"Be jabers, mebbe some av thim will swim!" cried Barney.

"Right," said Frank, "hold the air-ship down to that point, Pomp."

"A'right, sah!"

The Needle now was scarcely a hundred yards from the spot. The vortex of water had hardly ceased to boil.

Barney threw lines overboard.

The air-ship hovered scarcely twenty feet above the water. For a moment nothing was seen of any human being.

It was a question as to whether any survived or not. But at the last moment two men were seen clinging to a spar.

All the rest of the crew had gone down in the vortex. It was a terrible thing to contemplate.

Barney yelled to the two survivors:

"Whurroo! there, wud yez catch on to this."

With which he threw them the rope.

The exhausted sailors made a powerful effort and reached the rope. It was but a few moments work then to draw them aboard the air-ship.

"Saved!" cried Malabar, as they come over the rail. "That was a good job."

Both were dark complexioned, and of Portuguese nationality. They seemed wonder-struck at being rescued in so singular a manner.

"Santa Maria!" gasped the tallest, in Portuguese. "Are we in Heaven? Or is this a dream?"

"Neither," replied Frank, in the same language. "You are aboard my air-ship, the Needle."

"Mother of Mary! You are the captain?"

"Yes!"

"I have sailed the seas all my life, but I have never seen a ship sail the air before."

Then the fellow explained that he was the captain of the bark which had foundered, and that his name was Manuel Ferrero.

His companion was the purser, Jose Masson, and they had sailed from Lisbon a week previous.

"We were on our way to the Azores," explained Ferrero. "We met a heavy storm, and our ship leaked badly. We could not keep her up."

"There were ninety on board," said the purser. "We are the only survivors."

"For which we are thankful," said Captain Ferrero.

And he devoutly crossed himself. After which he asked:

"And whither do you sail, Senor Captain of the air?"

"We are making for the Azores now," replied Frank.

"Ah, that will be very acceptable to us. You will drop us there?"

"If you wish!"

The survivors of the wreck were taken below and treated to a hearty meal by Pomp.

Then they came on deck again. But a new contingency had arisen.

The sky had suddenly grown black as night in the northeast. A sobbing wind went playing over the sea.

The storm which Frank had predicted was rapidly coming. That it would be a severe one there was no doubt.

Frank realized this and was resolved to be amply prepared for it. He had some hopes that he could rise above it and escape it altogether.

The cabin doors were closed and all were ordered below.

Extra bars and braces were applied to the rotoscope shafts. Everything possible was done to make the ship secure.

Then Frank went into the pilot-house with Barney and Pomp.

Frank's first move was to turn the elevating switch. The rotascopes began to buzz and up shot the Needle.

Up, up, she went like a rocket.

Soon clouds lay beneath in black and angry piles. A distant dull, booming like the discharge of artillery was heard.

Frank saw the mighty storm clouds come piling in from the North.

The air grew fearfully chilly. Frost formed on the pilot-house window. There was a sense of suffocation.

"We have gone as high as we can," cried Frank. "We shall suffocate if we go higher."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE air-ship, therefore was held in suspense at this enormous height. They were miles from the earth.

Yet Frank saw that the range of the storm extended up even to where they were.

However, he had hopes that they would succeed in escaping the worst of it. This proved true.

The storm came on with a rush and a wild howl like the wail of a concourse of lost spirits.

The air-ship was caught up like a feather and whirled round and round for many times.

Frank clung to the wheel and held her steady as he could. Beneath them all could hear the bellowing of the elements.

For half an hour the hurricane raged. After the first shock, however, the air-ship was quite steady.

But it was with a breath of relief that all saw the black clouds roll away to the south, and knew that the battle of the elements was over.

"Hurrah!" cried Malabar, "we have survived, Frank!"

"For which we have good reason to be thankful."

"You are right."

"Now for home!"

Home! the word had a magical sound to all. The air-ship slid down into a lower stratum of atmosphere.

The balance of the trip to Terciera was unmarked by any exciting incident.

Here the two rescued Portuguese sailors were safely landed.

A brief stop was made for the repairing of the engines. This proved most enjoyable.

They were very hospitably received by the governor of the islands and entertained with great cordiality at his home.

The beauties of these islands have to be seen to be appreciated. All in the party were sorry to leave the Azores.

But the leave-taking was necessary, and once more the air-ship was on her way.

The last run home it was, and Frank made it a speedy one. But in spite of extreme efforts, head winds held the air-ship back so that Frank one day appeared on deck and said:

"We shall make it on the thirtieth day. We cannot beat that!"

"Well, that is good enough!" declared Malabar.

"It will have to do!"

And just as Frank predicted the air-ship reached New York on the thirtieth day. It was a famous occasion.

The remarkable feat had been accomplished. Around the world in thirty days was surely the greatest feat of the age.

That it would be excelled by any other medium was not to be thought of. The Needle's party were famous for all time.

But Frank did not wait for any ovation in America's great metropolis. He proceeded at once to Readestown.

The electric engines had stood a mighty test. But it was their limit.

Frank reckoned that five hundred miles more would have worn them out.

The wear and tear and strain of such a journey can hardly be understood or explained in words.

Barney and Pomp were glad to return to their duties about the shops. Frank went at once to work upon a new invention just as if nothing had happened.

Word was received not long after from Augustus Floyd, the gambler.

Before leaving Constantinople he had incurred the displeasure of the Sultan, and his neck was barely saved by Consul Wagner.

It is safe to say that he will not again lay wager against the success of any of Frank Reade, Jr.'s inventions, with which intimation let us bring our story to

[THE END.]

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